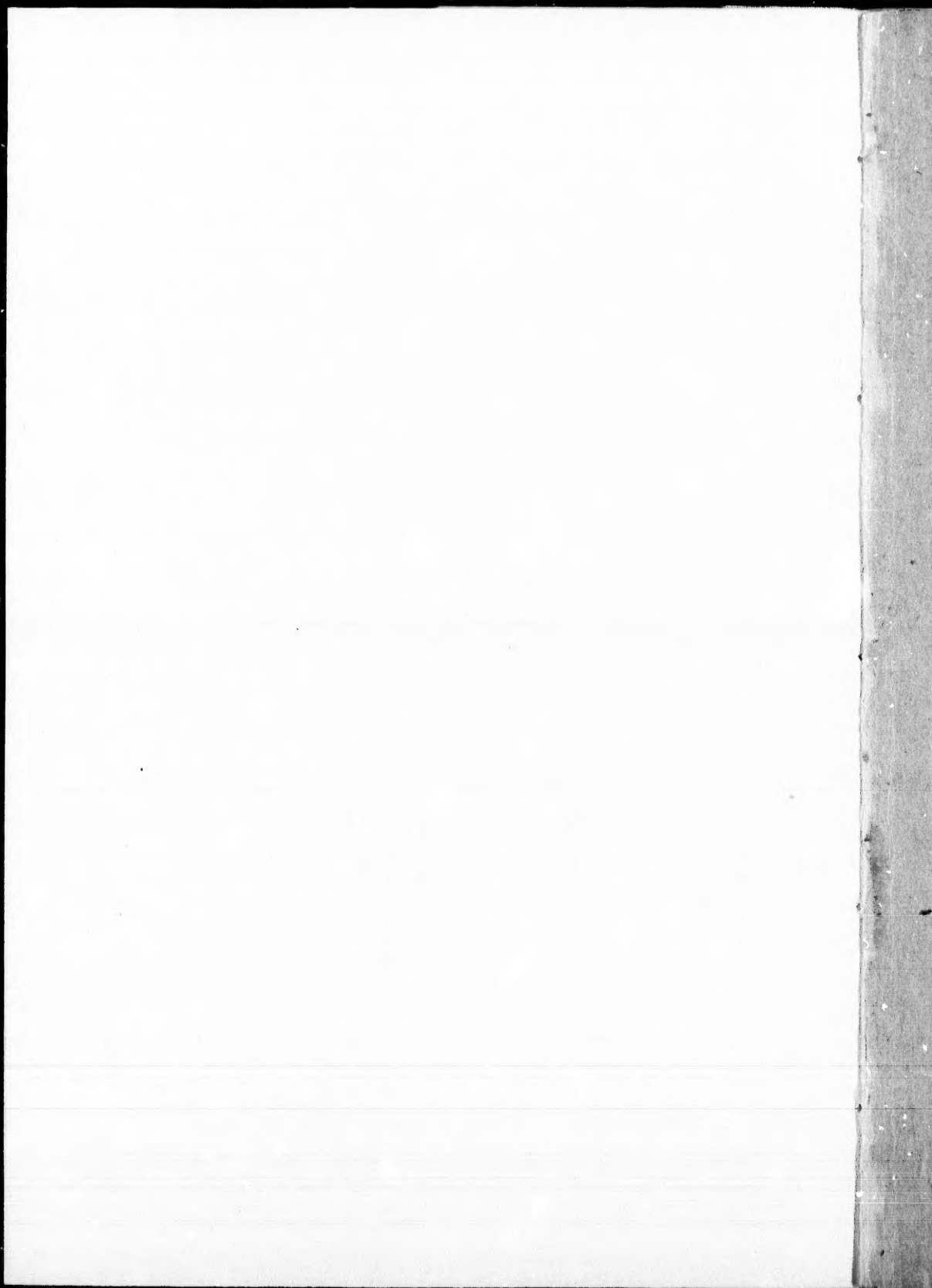




Mr. BLAKE

HIS CLAIM TO SPECIAL PURITY EXAMINED.

"THE WHITE FLOWER OF A BLAMELESS LIFE."

A POLITICAL TRACT.

The issues on which the present electoral contest is so fiercely debated, are largely personal, and the character of Mr. EDWARD BLAKE is always, in season and out of season, paraded by his friends as the reason why he should be preferred. The chief of his newspaper organs is never weary of declaring that *his* career, at least, exhibits the white flower of a blameless life, as distinguished from the alleged stains on the characters of such men as Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Charles Tupper.

It is well that our statesmen should have blameless lives, and the symbol of a white flower is a pretty one; but does the character of Mr. Blake, as a statesman, stand higher than that of the two men with which it is, with so much offensiveness, so much compared? The question is not one of opinion, but of facts, plain before the eyes of all men who will take pains to examine.

The laudation of Mr. Blake does not simply stop with him, but it also takes in the character of his father, who has gone before him, a fact which has led to some bitter, unnecessary, and, probably, undeserved criticism, in that it has been said that the father, with the grabbing instincts of the family, was the author of an Act of Parliament to create a place for himself, to which he retired about eight months after its passage.

The real facts on this head are that Mr. Blake, the father, was, like the son, a man of somewhat impassioned eloquence, but he was not a prudent man, and it is an undoubted fact that a number of the more steady going supporters of Messrs. Lafontaine and Baldwin told those ministers that they must shelve him; and Mr. Blake was accordingly placed on the shelf of which he was himself the artificer, but not for that special purpose as has been erroneously and unjustly alleged.

The life of Mr. Blake, the son, may be said to be blameless, in that nobody accuses him of being guilty of any breach of the ten commandments, except that, perhaps politically, it would be very difficult to say, that he has not unduly coveted that which is his neighbours, or that he has not borne much false witness against his political neighbour; and there is enough in this to tarnish some of the delicate tints of that white flower.

Mr. Blake, the son, like the father, if not exactly a "Boanerges," is a very voluble man. He speaks with many words on all sorts of subjects, displaying in this much ability and industry, but of that kind known as "special pleading;" and on this point, it is to be said, that the habit of volubility and saying many words on many subjects, whatever may be the immediate effect as a sort of fireworks display, are in their nature, in inverse ratio to carefulness of thought.

In judging the pureness or its opposite of the characters of public men, we must look at the facts of their public lives, without suffering ourselves to be guided by the mere shouts of their partisans, which are generally very far from being disinterested.

In 1871 Mr. Blake was a member of the House of Assembly of the Province of Ontario, when Mr. Sanfield Macdonald was the Premier. It was immediately after a contested election, which was remarkable for singular bitterness, Mr. Blake, during the contest in the constituencies, having very vigorously waved,—to borrow a figure from American politics—the “bloody shirt” of Thos. Scott; and having, as was not inaptly said during the late provincial election contest, done very much to creep into power by his loud denunciations of the action of the Government of the day in dealing with, to use his own words, the “murderer, Louis Riel.” Still he did not quite succeed. Mr. Sanfield Macdonald’s Government obtained a nominal majority, but unfortunately suffered from an absence of eight of his supporters at the critical moment for him, owing to the incidents of contested elections, leaving him with only a majority of *one* in the House; and here came Mr. Blake’s opportunity.

The precise overtures which were made to Mr. E. H. Wood, the Treasurer of Mr. Sanfield Macdonald’s Government, have never yet been published, but they are and have been known. Without, however, going further on this point, it is quite sufficient for the present purpose to say it is indubitable that overtures were made to him to betray his chief, and so throw the Government into the hands of the Grits. And it is equally indubitable that the dishonourable incitement at the fatal moment was made by Mr. Blake.

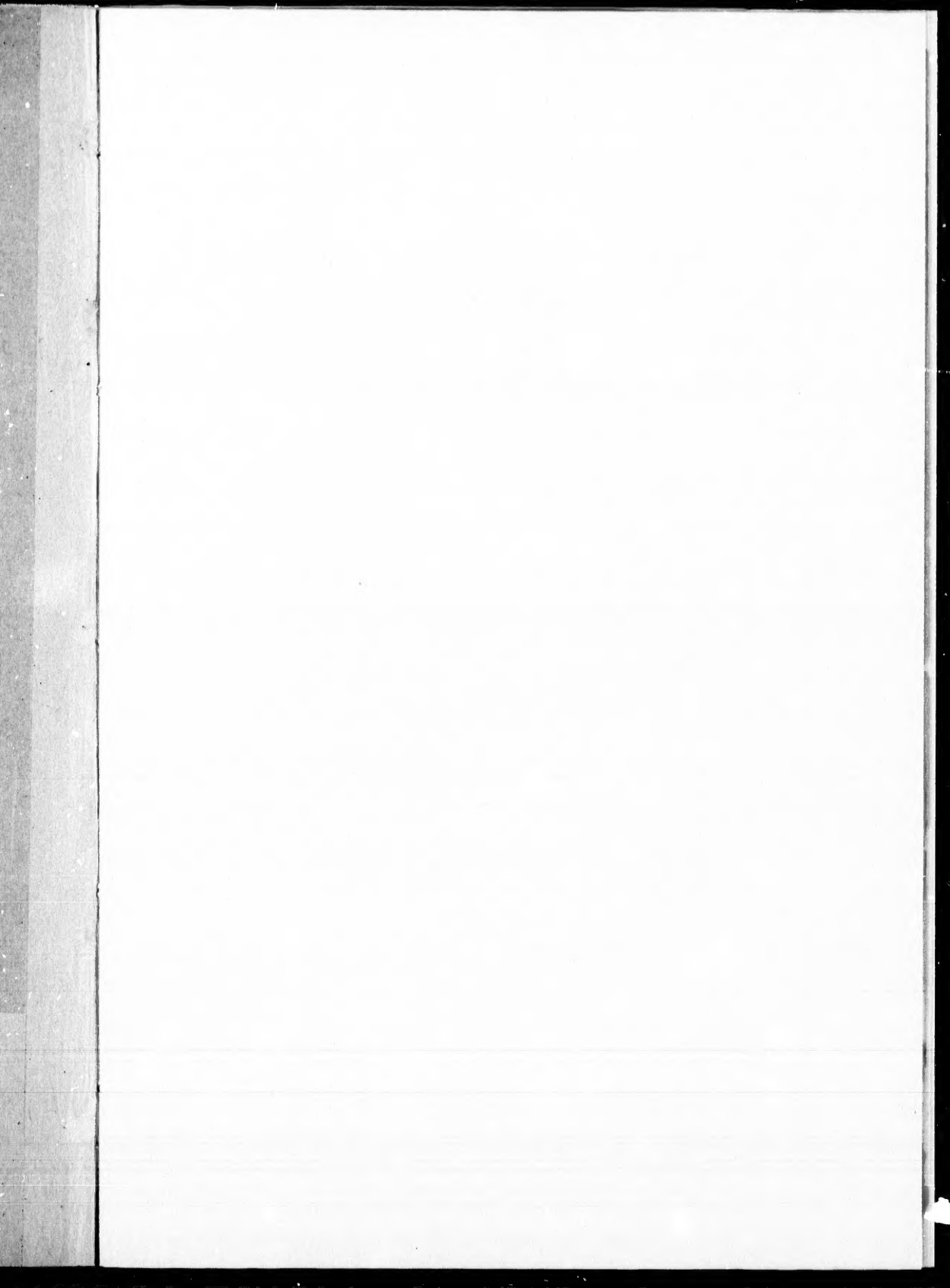
There are several circumstances about the evidence on this point that are not very nice, but still we cannot forbear to receive the facts by whatever means they may have been brought to light. Mr. Blake was seen to write and send a missive to Mr. Wood, which that gentleman tore up and put in a spittoon. The fragments were, however, picked out of their congenial receptacle and put together, revealing the fact of the following words in the handwriting of Mr. Blake:

“You had better speak now.

ED. BLAKE”

Mr. Wood did accordingly “speak now,” and the Government of Mr. Sanfield Macdonald fell, betrayed by one of his own Ministers. Perhaps this is, in all its incidents, one of the most dishonourable and meanest acts that the history of our politics has produced. It has made a stain on the character of Mr. Blake, like that stain of blood which Lady Macbeth could not rub out, and the simple recital of this history sounds strangely when contrasted with the claims of “the white flower of a blameless life.”

The ambition of the man who betrayed his master, or rather his Premier, had been played upon in the operations to which we refer, and he subsequently found a seat in the Dominion Parliament. He was afterwards appointed Chief Justice of Manitoba to the great scandal at the time of many of the loyal people of that province; but it is only just to his memory to say that he did, by his great abilities and industry as a judge, very much which might be put as an offset to the unsavoury and dishonourable proceedings we have related; proceedings that did not tend to bring peace in the arena of Dominion politics, to the parties concerned in them.



It is not necessary here to relate how Sir John's Government came to Parliament with a large majority which crumbled away, causing it to fall in 1873. For the purpose of this narrative, it is sufficient to say, a Government was formed under the Premiership of Mr. Alex. Mackenzie, and which on the very earnest advice of Mr. George Brown, again appealed to the country, although the elections had been so recent. The result politically, justified the sagacity which moved the advice. Mr. Mackenzie's Government was returned with a very large majority, and it was very confidently said, even openly in Parliament, that the star of Sir John Macdonald and his party had forever gone down.

Later, Mr. Blake joined Mr. Mackenzie's Government, serving under him. But how did he serve? and how did he support,—especially in those later years, when he had ceased to be a Minister, and when Mr. Mackenzie came to have troubles and difficulties? He scarcely concealed his want of respect for his leader, and very often when Mr. Mackenzie was making important ministerial expositions, this man of the white flower of honour, affected to yawn and go to sleep.

It came later, after death had deprived the party of the counsels and services of Mr. George Brown and Mr. L. H. Holton, and after the fortunes of the elections in 1878 had swept by a crushing majority, that Government away, that a caucus was held, of what may be called, the "rump" of a once great party; which alone survived in that parliament. Perhaps it might be unjust to say, and at any rate we cannot say, that that caucus was moved by Mr. Blake, for the purpose of deposing Mr. Mackenzie from the leadership to put Mr. Blake in his stead; but at least it must be said that Mr. Blake benefitted by it, and that a receiver is as bad as a thief, if indeed he is not a meaner and less courageous person. And it is further to be said that neither that caucus, nor its act, would ever have been, if either Mr. George Brown or Mr. L. H. Holton had lived.

The circumstances attending the calling of that caucus are known to have been characterised by detestable cruelty and meanness. A circular was simply sent to Mr. Mackenzie, a man who in uprightness of character as well as in political sagacity, was head and shoulders above them all, asking him to attend a caucus to choose a leader. He did not go, but the caucus met and elected Mr. Edward Blake as leader. These proceedings very nearly sent Mr. Mackenzie to his grave, and he is to this day an utterly broken down man; but yet he might use the phrase of the French king after the field of Pavia, "*Tout est perdu hors l'honneur.*"

It may be here asked whether there is anything in the political character of Sir John Macdonald, or Sir Charles Tupper, which will bear any comparison with these proceedings as affecting and discrediting and staining the character of the chief actor. It is true Mr. Blake did affect modesty and say he did not want the honour, did not want to be the leader. But are phrases of this kind of a nature to impose upon the intelligence of any man of common sense, or can they be regarded as other than a very thin veil of hypocrisy? It must be said that no luck has followed these proceedings. On the contrary a Nemesis has seemed to follow them and the party has ever since been broken and discredited. "Had Zimri peace who slew his master?"

If we examine Mr. Blake's life by the light of his publicly declared principles, we find a shifting position which is not compatible

with high political character. His outcry about the murder of Scott before the elections in 1871 was mere demagoguism, and not a very exalted type of that. But it seemed when we came to his London speech carefully written out upon his recent return from England, after the execution of Riel, we were about to have from him a loftier standard, when he declared that he was not willing to build a political platform on the scaffold of Louis Riel. That declaration had an air both of consistency and hope. But it was too good to last. The political intrigues began, and it was very soon apparent to all the world that Mr. Blake had become the ally of Mr. Laurier, the Rouge-leader of the Province of Quebec, to build on a Riel platform with the wildest possible cries of race and revenge, in our mixed population. It is true Mr. Blake's task, in his new position, was a very difficult one; and it must be admitted that he played with wonderful skill, the role of the "Artful Dodger;" his task being to reconcile two totally inconsistent positions, as represented by the feelings exhibited respectively in the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. His clear Grit allies, in the House, however, followed him straight in the wild grab for office, acting as though they had never had any principle, with the honourable exception of Mr. Mackenzie, who stood up alone among them and voted in vindication of his own personal honour and consistency.

Coming to the next great question which has divided for the last 8 or 10 years, our political parties, viz, that known as the National Policy, we find, here again, that Mr. Blake's political character will not bear investigation. For the last eight years, nothing could exceed the vigour of the denunciations of him and his allies of the protective principle involved in the fiscal policy of the Government of Sir John Macdonald. It was declared to be retrograde, outrageous and corrupt in some of its incidents; and disastrous in its consequences in relation to the prosperity of Canada. But now, when it comes to be seen how strongly this policy has fastened itself upon the sense of the country we have again the spectacle of Mr. Blake wheeling round and declaring that his success at the polls would not imply the reversal of the National Policy; and we have already seen Grit protectionist manufacturers at Brockville and elsewhere, declaring to him in addresses that they are satisfied with his definitions of policy. Are not these men touchingly confident and easily satisfied?

A change of this kind, and in such circumstances, is simply an offer to barter principles for power, and it is a sign by which the most vulgar of demagogues and tacticians are known. It is something which is quite different from a disinterested change of opinion, and the moral courage which leads to its confession. But it is a phase of character which is totally inconsistent with any high type, or indeed, any type of political morality; and it is a very curious commentary on the blatant claim to possession on the part of Mr. Edward Blake, of superior political morality to that of his fellows, and his claim to the "white flower of a blameless life."

The electors who are so partizan, or so blind, as to be deceived by that cry, cannot be said to be men from whom much could be expected in relation to the political development of the country; and any success which might attend its use at the polls would not augur well for the future of Canada.

